

Ministry of Finance. These include the agricultural landless workers, the beedi workers, handloom workers, rickshaw pullers etc. The unorganised labour in construction work, farming by tractors, cleaning of septic tanks and jungles, cultivation, spraying/dusting of insecticides/pesticides, mechanised, harvesting/threshing etc. are already covered for the benefit available under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923. The Government have also introduced a Scheme of ex-gratia payment for rehabilitation of the families of truck/bus drivers killed in inter-state road accidents. The benefits under this Scheme will be in addition to the benefit payable under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.

Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

5105. SHRI R.B. RAI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have received any representation from Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) for sending its funds (SCA etc.) directly to the Council;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government in regard thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) and (b) Some representations were received in this Ministry during 1992-93 from Shri Subhash Ghising, Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) requesting for release of special Central assistance for 1992-93 directly to the Council.

(c) Special Central assistance under the Hill Area Development Programme which included funds meant for Darjeeling area were being made available to the State Government long before the DGHC came into existence. Under the existing system, the Central funds were transferred to the State Government who further released funds to autonomous bodies/agencies.

Under the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act 1988, some of the developmental subjects were transferred to DGHC and some were retained by the State Government. The funds for the transferred subjects were sanctioned directly to the DGHC by the State Government. Moreover the Central assistance under HADP and Special Area Plan were not exclusively for DGHC.

No deviation from the existing arrangement of allocation/transfer of funds to autonomous bodies/agencies by the State Government was considered necessary as the latter is not only responsible for monitoring of the overall expenditure under the State Plan but is also accountable for utilisation of funds.

Relations with Israel

5106. SHRI VIJAY GOEL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the twelfth Ministerial Conference of NAM has appealed to its Member Nations to freeze their relations with Israel at present level;

(b) if so, the diplomatic moves & policy measures which India propose to adopt in the context of improving cooperation between India and Israel in a number of fields; and

(c) the role of India on lessening the tension between Israel and Arab countries ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) India's on-going functional cooperation with Israel will be further developed taking into account the NAM Declaration.

(c) India has extended full support to the Middle East Peace Process and has, accordingly, urged all parties concerned to work purposefully to move the peace process forward within agreed time schedules, building further upon interim agreements and understandings, so as to take it to its logical conclusion.

Natural Gas

5107. SHRI SATYAJITSINH DULIPSINH GAEKWAD : SHRI B.K. GADHVI :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the T.L. Sankar Committee on pricing of natural gas had recommended a hike in pricing of Natural Gas with effect from April 1, 1997;

(b) if so, the details of the hike recommended and the rationale therefor; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The committee has recommended producer prices of Rs. 1800 per thousand cubic metres and Rs. 1900 per thousands cubic metres of ONGC and OIL respectively. The committee has recommended the transportation charge of Rs. 1150 per thousand cubic metres along the HBJ pipeline. The committee has recommended an annual increase of Rs. 200 in the consumer price of gas over the pricing period.

(c) The recommendations are under examination by the Government.

Expenditure Incurred on Subsidies

5108. SHRI SANAT MEHTA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the latest figures of expenditure incurred on various subsidies such as subsidy on foodgrains, sugar, kerosene, LPG, Urea, Nitrogenous fertilisers in 1996-97; and

(b) the estimates of these subsidies at the time of framing budget of 1996-97 ?